

Position Title: Beginning Farmer Apprentice
Location: Zenger Farm - Portland, OR
Position Type: Temporary; March 17th - October 31st, Monday – Thursday
Pay Rate: \$576/week, average of 32 hours per week
Position Close Date: 5 PM, February 3rd, 2025. Open until filled.



About Zenger Farm:

Zenger Farm is a 501(c)3 nonprofit working urban farm in Portland, OR that models, promotes, and educates about sustainable food systems, environmental stewardship, community development, and access to good food for all. We are guided by a vision of a healthy, resilient community, where the wellbeing and prosperity of children and adults, regardless of race, geography or socio-economic status, is enhanced through access to affordable, plentiful and nourishing foods. As a justice centered, food access and education non-profit, we believe nourishment is a basic human right and that the root causes of inequitable food access – racism, poverty and other systems of oppression – must be addressed to create a just food system.

Our multiple programs center on food access and knowledge sharing centering our relationship with food and the environment. This includes youth education opportunities with the local school district and families, cooking workshops led by women of color food leaders, partnering with other farmers and clinics to provide access to affordable produce to medically vulnerable communities and operating a full-scale CSA and beginning farmer apprenticeship program.

We seek to train an inclusive next generation of farmers. Nationwide, 95% of farmers are white, 85% of farmers are men, and the average age of a farmer is 60-years-old. Many other groups are underrepresented. This apprenticeship program seeks to decrease these disparities in representation caused by systems rooted in white supremacy, colonialism, racism, capitalism and sexism. Therefore, we encourage Black, Indigenous, and people of color, women, LGBTQ2SIA people, religious minorities, recent migrants/refugees, people with disabilities who can meet the responsibilities and qualifications, and people from different generational and economic backgrounds to apply. This farm apprenticeship program is designed for people with little or no experience farming.

We seek to model an agroecological alternative to “conventional agriculture” while centering food justice work and developing practices that build soil health. Agroecology is the holistic study of the entire food system, encompassing ecological, economic and social dimensions. It applies ecological principles to agricultural systems, considering the interactions between plants, animals, humans and the environment. Agroecology focuses on enhancing biodiversity, improving soil health, reducing dependency on synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and supporting healthy communities and food systems. Additionally, in order to create an environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just food system, agroecology integrates science and research, farming practices, indigenous knowledge, and movements for social change. It is a transdisciplinary, participatory, action-oriented, and socially-engaged transformation of the food system.

Farm Apprentices care for a small farm site, demonstration gardens, and fruit crops. Zenger Farm is certified organic. We grow a small diversity of crops (vegetables, flowers, and herbs) at these locations, where we spend the majority of our time. Farm Apprentices will get to learn agroecological farming and gardening practices. In 2025, we will incorporate practices that focus on improving soil health, including no/low-till and on-farm compost. Apprentices will also be helping with fruit crop pruning and maintenance.

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The core of the Zenger Farm apprenticeship consists of two beginning farmer training staff and four full-season farm apprentices. Farm apprentices spend much of their time mentored by our two farmer training staff. As farm apprentices gain more skills and familiarity with farming, there will be opportunities for independent and group work. Additionally, farm apprentices will lead volunteers and other work parties.

Education of the body is a component of this apprenticeship. We teach apprentices the underlying ergonomics of farm work. Farming is intense physical work and in nearly all weather conditions. Proper ergonomics are essential for sustainable farm endeavors. Your stamina, self-care, and efficiency will help you operate your own farm successfully.

We provide an immersive and comprehensive education in farming. Farm apprentices will have direct experience in all aspects of our farming operation and will take turns leading projects that are applicable to future farm endeavors. The farm apprenticeship includes over 40 hours of classroom instruction in topics such as crop planning, irrigation, seed saving, soil fertility, recordkeeping, etc. This classroom instruction includes additional opportunities to attend classes and field trips with other local farms, farm service providers, and community-based food systems organizations. Apprentices will occasionally participate in other programming at Zenger Farm (Youth Education, Food Access, and CSA Partnerships for Health).

We seek to provide a compassionate education. Zenger Farm recognizes that many people, disproportionately Black, Indigenous and Latinx folks, have historical and current traumas related to land access and agricultural work. We strive to create as much of a supportive environment as possible through prioritizing preventative care, open feedback, routine check-ins, and communicating expectations. Apprentices will examine the root causes of injustice in our food system through facilitated discussion with the team prompted by readings, videos, and talks. We make space for apprentices to develop connections and network within the small farming community in Portland to see firsthand how small scale farmers are innovating solutions. Through immersive field work, conversation, and creating space, we hope apprentices can start to see themselves as part of a solution for change through agriculture.

Time Commitment

- March 17th - October 31st, Monday – Thursday, 8-10 hours/day
- Approximately 20 hours over the entire season to attend other programming at Zenger Farm including community events, field trips, etc.
- Zenger Farm Apprentices will attend the portions of the Beginning Farmer Educational Event Series (BFEES) offered by Rogue Farm Corps. BFEES classes are offered on Wednesdays (online - 6-8 PM; in-person 3-6 PM)

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Responsibilities

- Field work: Most field work at Zenger Farm is done with hand tools, and includes seeding, amending, transplanting, weeding, irrigating, trellising, pruning, season extension, pest management, harvesting, hauling and washing produce.
- Rotating responsibilities in all aspects of our farming operation, such as management of the propagation greenhouse, irrigation, and field preparation; leading planting, harvest, wash and pack; supervising volunteer work parties; recordkeeping writing newsletters; and a two-week rotation leading the entire crew in all field work.
- Off-field educational opportunities: participate in classroom education, engage in independent projects related to farming and food systems, and attend field trips.

Qualifications

- A strong commitment to the mission of Zenger Farm
- Demonstrated interest in farming and/or sustainable food systems
- Intention to maintain continued involvement in the agricultural and food systems community by engaging in farm/food systems work or the development of a small farm business
- Identifying as Black, Indigenous, or Person of Color (BIPOC)
- Ability to lift and carry 50 pounds, farm outdoors in all weather conditions including heat, cold and rain to perform the above responsibilities
- Ability to endure prolonged periods of physical activity, including walking, standing, squatting, and repetitive tasks
- Attitude: Positive, driven, flexible and team-oriented
- Current regular driver's license
- We will perform a background check and address any issues on a case-by-case basis – no one should feel discouraged from applying
- We cannot help with visas or work permits for this program

Benefits

- \$576/week stipend, paid monthly
- Employee Assistance Program offered by Oregon Educators Benefit Board
- Farm-fresh organic produce, based on availability

Zenger Farm provides equal opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, handicap, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity, in accordance with applicable federal laws.